

Santa Rosa County
Emergency Services Advisory Committee
December 17, 2003
2:00 p.m.

MINUTES
Corrected 02/18/04

Members Present:

Gerry Goldstein
Lew Oliver
Chris Rucker

Tony Simmons
Don Vanderryt

Members Absent:

Joe Diamond

John E. Reble

Staff Present:

Sheryl Bracewell
Deb Grinde

Dave Ling

Agenda for this meeting approved with the addition of a break at 3:30 p.m. This time slot was created for the committee to attend a presentation of toys donated by Rural Metro and county employees for distribution through the Toys for Tots association. More than 570 toys and books were loaded on two (2) brand new ambulances purchased recently by Rural Metro.

Minutes for meeting held November 19, 2003 accepted and approved as submitted.

Presentation was provided by Chief James Crisco, Pace Volunteer Fire Department, Pace, FL regarding the Pace VFD. The Pace Fire Department, referred to as Station 21, covers approximately 63 square miles and meets the needs of approximately 30,000 people. The area has many, many subdivisions and two main highways, Hwy 90 and Woodbine Rd. The Department was formed in 1959 and has four (4) existing stations. The stations are within five (5) miles of each other. The Department answers approximately 140 calls per month.

The Pace Volunteer Fire Department has a roster of approximately 28 volunteers. It includes seven (7) first responders of which four (4) are EMTs and one (1) is a paramedic.

Chief Crisco stated that he believes that there are too many restrictions made by the state and this will have an unfavorable effect on the volunteer fire departments in the future.

Major concerns in Pace include funding as the most important. The current firehouse was built in 1959. Due to the rapid growth in Pace the community has outgrown the current facility and find it necessary to build a new home for the Department. The substations were built in 1990, 1997 and 2000. Estimates for the new building are close to \$750,000.00.

The new station is being planned considering that the Sheriff's Office would share space with the Department. They are currently looking at approximately 3 acres behind Pace High School.

The Department has the task of paying for equipment that is fairly new and in good condition. That includes a seventy-five foot (75') ladder truck, which is one of two in the county. They have three (3) pumper trucks and a squad truck.

The three hundred thousand dollar (\$300,000.00) annual budget is allocated to items such as insurance, overhead and equipment payments. Chief Crisco believes that as much as forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00) a year is spent on insurance alone. Seven thousand dollars (\$7,000.00) of which is for workmen's compensation insurance. They pay for coverage under a one million dollar (\$1,000,000.00) blanket policy.

Another problem in the Pace area is manpower. Due to the rapid growth in the Pace area a lack of manpower raises a major concern.

The committee addressed the fact that the Pace Department has a higher percentage of "no response" calls. Chief Crisco indicated that a lack of first responders within his department does have an impact on those numbers. He also stated that since an ambulance is usually stationed at the Pace station it is difficult to respond to a medical call when, in fact, the med unit has already responded and terminated the call. Chief Crisco also advised the committee that records should indicate that the department did respond to all Echo calls and all Fire calls.

Chief Crisco stated that his department is not compensated for any calls responded to that are zoned agricultural or any labeled forestry areas.

Chief Crisco reiterated the fact that his operating budget is \$300,000 per year; he submits a proposed budget every year and his biggest concern is for additional funding. Grant funds are over and above the operating budget and are allocated to specific items. He would also like the funding to be more equitable to the departments throughout the county. He pointed out that the Walmart store in Pea Ridge pays only \$650.00 per year for fire services, while the Walmart in the Midway district pays approximately \$6,000.00 per year for the same services.

Presentation was provided by Chief Jim Wirth, Navarre Beach Volunteer Fire Department, Navarre Beach, FL regarding the Navarre Beach VFD. In addition to making a presentation to the committee, Chief Wirth also came to make a request of the committee for his department. Navarre Beach is comprised of four (4) miles of public beach access and due to that fact drowning has become a major problem for the department. During the past year, from June through September, they have paid personnel to be available along the beach for extra protection. They paid two employees six thousand dollars (\$6,000.00) per month for those four months. This is partly due to the fact that they have few volunteers and expect fewer volunteers this coming year. They need to maintain these employees in order to support the number of tourists we have on Navarre Beach. It is speculated that there would have been approximately four to six fatalities this past summer if the paid personnel were not working. There is a county lifeguard that covers approximately 300 yards of the beach. Rural Metro personnel treat the subjects only after they have been removed from the water. Chief Wirth would appreciate the county's assistance in this matter and is requesting that the county pay 50% of the costs, which would be \$12,000.00, as the department absorbs these costs

from their operating budget. Their annual operating budget is \$186,000.00.

G. Goldstein made the recommendation that this committee address these needs and approach the BOCC regarding this matter.

Chief Wirth then proceeded to inform the committee that the Navarre Beach VFD consists of 14 volunteers. It covers approximately one square mile; that it is 4 miles long and approximately one-quarter mile wide. They sustain an ISO rating of five. They own a 75' 1998 ladder/pumper truck and a 1984 pumper. Additional equipment includes three (3) 4WD vehicles and an inflatable boat (Zodiac). They have no scuba gear. He advised this committee that all of his volunteers are very well trained.

Chief Wirth would like to request that this committee recommend to the BOCC that modifications be made to the MSBU fees in order to accommodate the paid personnel for the summer months of 2005.

L. Oliver suggested that those months be covered from May 15 through September 15.

Review of Reports/Statistics

Reviewed Analysis of Emergency Calls Report for the month of November 2003. G. Goldstein noted that the percentage of "No Response" dispositions for Allentown VFD, Bagdad VFD and Pace VFD increased noticeably when comparing November to October.

Discussion ensued regarding the semantics of the report itself. S. Bracewell explained what some of the issues are and indicated that other reports may be available for further details. There was some concern from L. Oliver regarding the differences in response time between the paid and non-paid departments. Discussed the fact that, in most instances, the length of time it takes to respond to a call can be attributed to the differences in the geography and population density of the areas. In addition, C. Rucker noted that a large population density could support a paid department and a not so dense population could not.

Correspondence and Additional Items

Reviewed memo issued by H. Walker regarding payment for fire services by private industry. Records indicate that they pay little or no taxes for these services. D. Ling advised that a more complete report regarding exemptions, etc, would be available for our next meeting.

Old Business

It was determined that all issues listed on the agenda under 'old business' will be postponed until the next meeting.

However, some discussion was held regarding the Fire Department Insurance. It was noted that if all departments were grouped together to purchase insurance, some departments would be placed into a higher premium bracket and some departments would be placed into a lower premium bracket. Need to determine whether insurance representatives are scheduled to speak to this committee regarding fire department insurance. L. Oliver spoke to a Midway Fire Department representative regarding this subject. He also learned how the departments in Escambia County handle their insurance requirements. He believes that there should be a considerable savings to all departments involved if they approach their insurance needs as a group.

G. Goldstein suggested that the committee continue with this discussion at the next meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

T. Simmons suggested that committee members complete a form when completing tours at the various fire stations. The form should be standardized and would provide information regarding the site visit for future reference. Items that might be included on the form would be the condition of the station, the condition of the apparatus, etc. It was stated that Chief Reble might be able to assist in providing more ideas to add to the format.

T. Simmons will bring a preliminary form or list of questions and suggestions to the next meeting.

L. Oliver suggested that all committee members review the completed questionnaire submitted by that fire station prior to the tour of that facility in order to become more familiar with that particular site.

L. Oliver would like to see the 'Draft Minutes' posted as soon after the meeting as possible for the members' review. S. Bracewell will verify the legality of posting those minutes that have not yet been approved.

PUBLIC FORUM

Richard Collins, Chumuckla Hwy, Pace, FL

Mr. Collins suggested to the committee that the Tourist Development Council share the responsibility of paying \$12,000.00 for additional personnel during the summer months that was requested by the Navarre Beach Volunteer Fire Department.

Mr. Collins attempted to explain the "No Response" data for Allentown Volunteer Fire Department. He advised this committee that there are no daytime firefighters and so, no daytime first responders. They have only one nighttime firefighter and only one nighttime first responder. He believes that this may explain the lack of response from the Allentown VFD.

Mr. Collins wanted to point out that the Santa Rosa County Firefighters Association was offered assistance by the county for recruiting Firefighters and First Responders. He stated that members of the Santa Rosa County Firefighters Association failed to take advantage of the offer provided by the county. S. Bracewell mentioned that Midway Fire Dept. did have information regarding the recruitment of Firefighters and First Responders aired county wide on Don Chinery's program.

Mr. Collins believes that no on-going effort is being made to strongly recruit first responders as recommended by the EMS Task Force in 2001.

Discussion ensued regarding that recommendation and Mr. Collins then suggested that this committee track what has already occurred as a result of the EMS Task Force.

G. Goldstein applauded C. Rucker of Rural Metro Ambulance Service regarding the news article that commended them for meeting and/or exceeding their contractual requirements!

The committee broke at this time to attend a presentation of toys provided by county employees for the Toys for Tots program.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Submitted by D. Grinde